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THE
Y O U N G W I D O W;
OR, THE
H I S T O R Y
OF
MRS. L E D W I C H.

YOUNG WIDOW

H. F. R. Y.



Mrs. F. D. W. C. H.

THE
YOUNG WIDOW;
OR, THE
HISTORY

OF
MRS. LEDWICH.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS
TO
JAMES LEWIS, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

D U B L I N:

Printed for Messrs. MONCRIEFFE, JENKIN,
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Mr. E. D. W. C. H.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

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THE TWO VOL. 2.

Y. G. L. I.

W. B. L. W.

WALKER, ELLIOT, WHITE, COLLETT,
WILKINSON, and others.

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TO THE

R E A D E R.

THE Editor sincerely hopes that he will not be considered as an advocate for vice, in laying before the eye of the public a work wherein, he freely acknowledges, indiscretions (pardon the *misnomer*, if it *be* one) are painted in too alluring and fascinating colours. But as the design of it is evidently to shew how ineffectual and unavailing are the gifts of nature and of fortune to procure real and permanent happiness, when unaccompanied by *virtue*, he trusts he shall
be

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be considered in the light of a *moralist* rather than an *encourager* of *vice*, and that his motive for forwarding this publication, was to convince the young and inexperienced, by a recent example, that to be *criminal* is to be *unhappy*.

The heroine of the piece is the writer of her own history, and the narrative shews she has not been indulgent to her failings. The unreserved manner in which she exposes, to her lover, what most women would study to conceal, is a proof of her sincerity, and bespeaks an ingenuous mind; but the instances she produces of her culpability, though marked with a becoming censure and dislike, will, it is feared, operate so much to her disadvantage with her readers, as scarcely to find a single apologist

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logist among them. For this reason it was judged necessary to give *feigned* names to the several characters that figure in the work. To have retained those that were *real*, would have been invidious; it would have been holding up to the censure of the world, a woman, whose conduct, *now*, is as blameless and respectable, as her person is amiable and attractive.

H. S.

THE

EXPERIMENT

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CHAPTER II.

THE

THE
YOUNG WIDOW;
OR, THE
HISTORY of Mrs. LEDWICH.

LETTER I.
TO JAMES LEWIS, Esq;

SIR,

I HAVE so often promised you a recital of the occurrences of my life, and so frequently broke my promise, that I imagine, by this time, you begin to believe I never mean to fulfil it: however, you will find yourself as much mistaken in that thought, as you have been in
A 5 your

your too favourable opinion of me.—
 It is doubtless a mortifying task to be obliged to recite our own failings; but I have no alternative:—you so vehemently urge your passion for me, that in my own defence I am reduced to the necessity of proving to you, by a recital of past facts, that I am incapable of ever loving more.—Yes, I feel I am; the tender passion is totally eradicated from my bosom, never to return.

But not to keep you longer in suspense, I will inform you, without disguise, of every material circumstance that may serve to account for that apathy I have just mentioned, and which is so rarely found in the youthful part of the female world.

You must excuse me if I forbear mentioning the name of my family; therefore let it suffice that I was an only child, and that my father sacrificed me, when very young, to the arms of age and deformity, for the gratification of his own ambition and avarice: but he did not long survive to enjoy the prospect

spect of my grandeur, nor to be a witness to the misery that attended it.—

And though my husband lived only two years after our marriage, yet surely never was there any wretchedness equal to what I suffered; for, to all the infirmities of age, was joined a morose petulance far more disgusting and insufferable. However, I bore my fate as patiently as I could, till his death restored me to my former freedom and happiness.

My conduct, during my husband's life, was so unexceptionable, that he left to me his whole estate, which is a very large one.

It would be ridiculous to pretend that I was affected at his decease, because it cannot be thought I was.—I felt indeed, at first, something *like* sorrow, but the joy of being uncontrouled, and possessed of an immense fortune, soon dissipated every melancholy reflection, and left me delighted with my situation.

I was

I was just turned of eighteen when I became a widow, an age when every enjoyment is heightened to rapture, and every pleasure is magnified.—All was novelty to me, and all appeared delightful; experience had not detected the fallacy; I was transported with what I possessed, and imagination heightened what was yet to come.

It would be needless to tell you, my dear sir, that I had many who addressed me on the subject of marriage; but it is necessary to say, that all their addresses proved fruitless. I had suffered so much in the first, that I resolved against a second, however inviting appearances might be, which resolution I have preserved to this day.—My heart, notwithstanding every attack made against it, continued obstinately insensible for above a twelvemonth; it was lost in the delights of dissipation, which guarded it against a softer impression: besides, the multiplicity of assailants served to secure me from a particular attachment, and like poisons of different natures, expelled each other.—But that was not always
to

to be the case. Some were disgusted with my indifference and left me, and sought, from those that were more kind, what they did not seem likely to obtain from me;—whilst others, either more truly enamoured, or more constant by nature, still persevered.

Among this number was Sir William Harley, a man whom I preferred beyond all his sex. His company always gave me delight, and his absence created uneasiness:—I became insensibly detached from pleasures whose novelty had amused, but never interested me, and which, by becoming familiar, had lost their prevailing charm.—In short, I was wearied, if not disgusted, with what I had before pursued with such avidity.

Sir William, I am assured, perceived my prepossession in his favour, even before I was sensible of it myself; but he had too much art not to be convinced, that to appear to have the least consciousness of it would be the utter destruction of his hopes.—I had several admirers that were greatly superior to him
both

both in point of birth and fortune, and perhaps in personal and mental qualifications also.—I know not why I gave him the preference, but suppose it was owing to that caprice of taste to which we are all in some measure subject.—He was about twenty-five years of age, his person more elegant than handsome, his understanding good, and his manners pleasing.—Certain it is, that I loved him, and I believe my passion and my existence would have terminated together, had he possessed those virtues which my partiality attributed to him.—That he was deficient in them, I did not discover but by experience.—He frequently urged his passion to me.—I always heard him with a secret pleasure ; and at last returned it with tenderness. He appeared transported with the consciousness of being beloved, and our time past away in the expression of mutual affection, and a reciprocation of endearments. He was always of every party with me, he attended me every where, and I was at that time more completely happy than at any other period of

of

of my existence :—All was tranquillity, and every succeeding hour brought pleasure, unattended with regret or disappointment.

The first alloy that I experienced to my happiness, was an alteration in Sir William's temper. He was, or feigned to be, jealous. This discovery created in me a thousand various sensations ; I either was wretched at his complaints, or irritated at his reproaches.—I intreated him one day to inform me, who it was he suspected to be preferred before him ? He answered, with a sigh, that he was too conscious of his own unworthiness to believe it possible I could be so much attached to him as I pretended ; that if he did me an injustice, my own affection would induce me to forgive the impetuosity of his ; but that if I in reality loved him, he could scarcely think that my aversion to marriage would still have continued ; and that till those scruples of mine were removed, he should ever believe, that I either was deceived in respect to my sentiments, or attempted to impose upon him.

I heard

I heard him with the utmost impatience and indignation. I told him, that such suspicions, instead of proving his love, only served to make me doubt it, or at least that it was passion unattended with esteem, which I never wished to be the object of; that his present conduct, so far from weakening my objections against marriage, had only strengthened them, and confirmed me in the justice of my resolution.

I spoke this with so much spirit, that Sir William immediately perceived he had gone too far—his countenance and manner changed—and in place of that wild impatience which he before expressed, he assumed the most mournful, supplicating air.—He fell at my feet—I raised him to my arms—and forgot, in his affected submissions, the just cause I had for anger at his insulting behaviour.

For some time after this he appeared to be perfectly satisfied, and never mentioned his jealousy to me: yet I frequently observed him melancholy, which affected me infinitely more than his reproaches

proaches could have done. I believed it to be a fault inherent to his nature, and loved him too tenderly not to forgive and overlook it.

The spring being now pretty far advanced, and London appeared to me disagreeable, I invited a young lady, with whom I was very intimate, to accompany me to a pleasant seat I had in the country, and she accepted my invitation. For form sake, Sir William was not of the party, but before we had been there a week he joined us.

You will, I suppose, wonder what my intentions were respecting Sir William. Of that, to say truth, I was myself ignorant. I was pleased with having him constantly with me, I was delighted with his conversation and his affiduities, and happy in the certainty of being beloved;—my heart was contented, and required no greater felicity, and I was weak enough to believe that Sir William was equally satisfied.

Our

Our short absence seemed to have endeared us to each other, the melancholy gloom, which he almost ever wore when in London, was entirely dissipated, and he again resumed his gaiety and good humour.

Miss Osborn, which was the name of the young lady that was with me, was possessed of but a small fortune, but had the expectancy of a very large one on the decease of an aunt, who was very old, and to whose care and management she was entrusted.—It was with some reluctance that the old lady consented to part with her niece for a few months, but our joint entreaties, at last, prevailed, and she agreed to her accompanying me.

I had a very great friendship and esteem for Miss Osborn; she was sensible, and lively to an excess, and appeared to be possessed of a good disposition and an excellent heart. Though she had but little pretensions to beauty, yet her person was perfectly agreeable, and when you was become familiar with her countenance,

tenance, it appeared the most engaging and pleasing in the world.—We entered very little into the spirit of visiting, or into those close intimacies which are generally contracted in the country, and forgot in town.—Our chief amusements consisted within ourselves, and our party was the happiest in nature.—Certain it is, that the pleasures of our intercourse could never be exceeded if equalled.

Sir William would sometimes lament the few opportunities he had of declaring his passion, as Miss Osborn was seldom from me; and at last, won me to consent to see him, if only for half an hour in the evening, when the rest of the family were in bed. He sometimes exceeded the time petitioned for, but his conduct was so unexceptionable, and his manner so tender and insinuating, that so far from repenting the indulgence I had granted, that I felt as much pleasure and satisfaction as he did.—He appeared for some time to be contented with the opportunity he had of professing his love for me without restraint, but by degrees his expressions were more lively and

and animated, and his caresses more warm and frequent. I should undoubtedly have been startled at the alteration in his manner, if it had not been by degrees so slow as to be scarcely perceptible.—He never infringed the bounds of modesty, and my heart was softened to a participation of his fondness, and warmed to take part with his endearments.—My situation was a dangerous one, yet I did not apprehend danger.—On the contrary, I wished as much for the hour that was to leave us at liberty, as he could possibly do. Sir William saw my emotions—is it then to be wondered, that he took an advantage of them? He had gradually, and by the most artful conduct heightened my passion for him till I had scarcely power or inclination to refuse him any thing.—In short, he pursued his conquest—till he left me nothing to refuse.

I imagine, my dear Sir, you are startled at this recital—but, remember, I promised you to be sincere, and I shall not even disguise or palliate one circumstance in my relation.

Sir

Sir William was transported, but concealed the joy his triumph gave him, by endeavours to mitigate my sorrow.

The first deviation from virtue must ever be attended with misery and regret; mine was extreme,—so much so, that I have heard Sir William frequently declare, he was apprehensive that what he at first imagined had secured me to him, would be the occasion of his losing me:—but he was too well skilled in the arts of seduction. He dried my tears, he endeavoured to compose my sorrow, nor did he, by the most distant word or look, seem to remember the advantage he had gained.—He judged right.—The restoring me to my own good opinion, was the only way to reconcile me to him.—He was sensible of that, and did every thing likely to convince me that his esteem for me was as great as ever;—my own vanity, and fatal belief of him, contributed to blind me—and I that had refused to be his wife, sunk, almost contentedly, to be his mistress.

Out

Our intercourse continued for a long time, and no one seemed to suspect it. I found no abatement either in Sir William's fondness, or the respect he paid me—I was satisfied both with myself and him, and so far from repenting of my compliance, that could I have recalled it, it would have been only a second time to have yielded.

The winter approached, and I proposed to him for us to return to town. He strenuously opposed it, and begged me to stay at least one month longer, alledging that our meetings in London would be more confined.—My heart joined with him, and I consented.—Our return was fixed at two months distance; for I was sensible that I should never quit a place where I had enjoyed so much pleasure, without the greatest reluctance.

When the time was near expired, which I had fixed for remaining in the country, I imagined I perceived some alteration in Sir William's conduct. He was more neglectful of *me*, and attentive to

to Miss Osborn; yet, fearful of my falling into the same error that he had done, and which I had so much condemned, I suppressed the idea of jealousy, as a suspicion that was injurious to him, and resolved not to encourage it.—However, when I mentioned to him, one evening, that I meant the next week to return to London, he did not endeavour to oppose it; on the contrary, seemed rather to be of opinion, that the dulness and dreariness of the country would be detrimental to my health and spirits.—He had forgot that every place must be the most pleasing to me, where I could enjoy his company, freed from restraint. I had too much pride not to pretend to be insensible to his coldness, and answered with an affected indifference, that I was anxious to leave the country, and that two days would be the longest I should remain in it.—I flattered myself that he would oppose my immediate departure, but I was mistaken. Preparations were made, without his even seeming to observe them; and when the day arrived, and we were actually in the carriage, he appeared to feel rather joy, than uneasiness.

—For

—For my part, I must confess my weakness; in spite of every effort, my tears streamed from my eyes; in leaving that place, I seemed for ever to have lost all happiness.

On our arrival in London, Miss Osborn, after staying with me a few days, returned to her aunt. Sir William, from this time, very seldom came to me, he pretending that the world would take notice of his too frequent visits, and report to my disadvantage. After having destroyed my virtue, he had thus the audacity to pretend a care for my reputation, to excuse his own perfidy.—Yet I still loved him, though convinced of his indifference, and had resolution sufficient to seem satisfied with his conduct. I was fearful that my reproaches would make him entirely throw aside the mask, and I could not support the thought of never seeing him more, though the sight of him was unattended with pleasure.

One morning, however, I received a letter from him, which, as I never destroyed it, I here copy for your perusal.

“I am

“ I am sensible I shall incur your an-
“ ger, and perhaps your hatred, by what
“ I am going to acknowledge to you :
“ but suffer me to plead in my own jus-
“ tification, and I flatter myself I shall
“ stand excused, if not acquitted.

“ You are convinced of the very sin-
“ cere passion I entertained for you, and
“ had not your aversion to marriage been
“ invincible, with what joy and pride I
“ should have chosen you for my wife !

“ The world I find talks loudly of our
“ long residence in the country, and at-
“ tributes it to motives not the most fa-
“ vourable to you.

“ To silence the tongue of slander, I
“ was this morning married to Miss Of-
“ born, that it might appear to be on
“ her account that I was with you.—
“ If, therefore, you are willing to do as
“ much for the preservation of your re-
“ putation, as I have done, suffer us to
“ be ranked amongst the number of your
“ visitors.—And assure yourself, my
“ beloved Amelia, I will ever retain a
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“grateful sense of the favours you have
 “conferred, and that I shall carefully
 “preserve the secret of my happiness,
 “and the knowledge of it shall descend
 “with me to the grave.”

You cannot imagine, my dear friend,
 what I suffered on reading this letter;—
 even to this day I have not forgot its
 cruel contents. However, I mustered
 up resolution to sit down, and answer it,
 which I did in these words:

“It was perhaps an unnecessary fear,
 “that your letter would create in me ei-
 “ther anger, or hatred;—*contempt* is
 “the only passion it has inspired:—
 “nor is it worth your while to endea-
 “vour at the justification of your con-
 “duct. Whilst it admitted of an excuse,
 “my own heart was your advocate.

“It was needless to mention the fin-
 “cerity of your passion, your marriage
 “this morning was a convincing proof
 “of it. That it was done merely to
 “preserve my reputation, it would be
 “the height of incredulity and injustice
 “to

“to doubt.—The world is at liberty to
 “censure my conduct : I am indifferent
 “about it ; and shall ever consider my
 “deliverance from a wretch, like you,
 “to be purchased cheaply, even at the
 “price of infamy.—When you know
 “these to be my sentiments, you will not
 “wonder at my determination, never to
 “see you more :—when I willingly con-
 “sent to it, I should be contented to be
 “as despicable in the eyes of the world,
 “as you are in mine.

“I do not thank you for your promise
 “of secrecy ; for though I would wish,
 “if possible, to escape shame, I do not
 “want to avoid it by an obligation to
 “you.”

I sent this letter immediately to him.
 He wrote to me two or three times after,
 but I always returned his letters back un-
 opened. I affected a spirit in my conduct
 to him, which my heart was far from
 feeling. The disappointment weighed
 heavy upon me—I spent my days and
 nights in tears, and dwelling on the re-
 collection of the past.

Sir William had no excuse for his conduct: he had laid a plan for my ruin, and deliberately pursued it.—It was not the sudden prevalence of passion, joined to opportunity: he formed his conduct, and proceeded no farther than was necessary to soften, and not alarm:—he lul'd me into a perfect security, and then took advantage of it.

Hitherto, my dear sir, you have seen me more weak than criminal, and yielding more to the entreaties of my lover, than my own inclination.—But that will not always be the case:—you will hereafter find me really guilty, and blush at your prepossession in my favour.

LET-

LETTER II.

SIR William and his wife left London, and when I was assured of not being exposed to the mortification of meeting the former, I yielded to the entreaties of my friends, and once more appeared in publick. Ah! how different were my sensations in every party, to what they had formerly been!—Harley was not there, and his absence made every thing insipid, and joyless to me. Men, who have the privilege of courting and pursuing every object that engages their affection, can have but a faint conception of the pangs of a slighted, deserted woman.—It was in vain to call pride, or reason, to my assistance—both were ineffectual;—I knew that he was undeserving of my tenderness, but I felt that his loss had made me wretched.—Time, however, in some measure, abated my grief, by bringing me acquainted with two gentlemen, who both strove, by every art in their power, to re-animate that flame which

Sir

Sir William had been too successful in inspiring.

Colonel Iredell, was the eldest son of an ancient family in Scotland.—His fortune, I believe, was rather confined, but his notions were generous and liberal. He was brave, and compassionate, and was more ready to forgive, than revenge an injury. He possessed a cool, sedate turn of mind, and a candid way of thinking. He made allowance for the faults of others, but had not often occasion to wish others to exert the same consideration for him, as he seldom, if ever, committed any.

He was tall, but not well formed; his manners were no ways pleasing, and there was something in his countenance which was far from being engaging; yet, with these disadvantages, he possessed the best heart in the world.

Lord Fitz-Hubert, on the contrary, was remarkable for an elegant form and engaging address, but his understanding did not soar above mediocrity. He had
few

few virtues, and few vices. He had an immoderate passion for women, but he was no way guilty of the crime of seduction—his amours being among the already ruined, and to them his generosity made him ever welcome.

Neither of these gentlemen, be assured, were calculated to triumph over Sir William's memory. Their assiduities sometimes amused, but more frequently fatigued me; every one indeed, appeared inferior to the man I had lost, but I was sensible of all that made pretensions to my heart, the Colonel and Lord Fitz-Hubert were the most worthy.

It was at this time the season for Bath—I determined on going there, to try the effect of the air and waters. I had little hopes of relief from either, but I was restless and uneasy, and change of place was necessary to dissipate the anxiety of my mind.—Accordingly I left London, engaged in new scenes, and new connections, and formed several which gave me great satisfaction.

Amongst

Amongst this number was a Mrs. Shelburn, who was come to Bath on account of her health.—The languor, which illness occasioned, only served to make her more irresistibly lovely ; and the dejection, which was caused by distress, had given a softness to her manners perfectly correspondent with her outward appearance.—I met her frequently at a friend's house—invited her to mine, and we soon became very intimate.—I pressed to know the reason of her melancholy ; she yielded to my intreaties, and informed me she had been married, when very young, to Mr. Shelburn ; that theirs was more a match of inclination, than a prudential one ; that it was against his father's consent, who had disowned him, and that hers had nothing but his blessing to bestow ; that her husband had only a clerk's place in a public office, which brought him in no more than fifty pounds a year, and that his father had cruelly refused to his solicitations the least assistance ; that her health was on the decline, which had obliged her, against her inclination, to be at Bath ; and that she scarcely wished for life, as she only brought misery and distress

distress on the man she loved better than herself.

I sympathized in her grief, and lamented secretly that my own story was not of a nature to be communicated. There is an advantage in innocence, however distressed, that it may always be above concealment.—Shame kept me silent—and I felt, in being debarred the privilege of complaining, some part of the punishment of guilt.

I wrote to Colonel Iredell, and begged him to be particular in his enquiries, if there was any place to be disposed of, and if worth the purchase money, to secure it for me. He sent me back almost an immediate answer, that there was one of two hundred a year, where the duty was very small, and the expence of the purchase trifling, and that he had secured it agreeable to desire.

It was with the utmost pleasure that I communicated the contents of this letter to Mrs. Shelburn.—Her gratitude and joy were too powerful for words;—she

thanked me with her tears. I had before prevailed upon her to make my house her own—and the joy she felt, on Mr. Shelburn's being relieved from his distresses, joined to my attention and care of her, helped to re-establish her health. The pleasures of her society served to mitigate my grief; and when I thought of Sir William, it was unaccompanied with that piercing regret, which had always before attended the recollection of him.

Mrs. Shelburn's brother, about this time, came down to see her.—He was a lieutenant in the navy, and just returned from a long voyage. He was the very counterpart of his charming sister; he seemed to be possessed of all her softness, and all her sensibility.—She informed him of the services I had rendered her, and his acknowledgments were the most lively and delicate imaginable.

I was charmed with his manner, and even before I knew myself to be beloved, felt so much pleasure in his society, that Sir William was almost entirely forgotten by me.

I could

I could perceive that Mr. Moreton, for that was his name, was pleased with my person, some time before he made a declaration of it.—He was timid, and fearful of offending; but I was too much inclined to favour his passion, to be dissatisfied at any thing, but his unnecessary respect. At last, the so-much wished-for acknowledgment was made;—he spoke, —I listened—approved, and believed.—His confusion was so great, that tho' I used every means in my power to dispel it, he could not entirely overcome his diffidence. In a short time, however, he declared himself with more freedom; when he was all tenderness and respect: my will was a law to him, and his wishes were all confined within the boundaries, of what he thought was due to me.—He would have been transported, if I would have consented to marry him; but however superior I might be in birth and fortune, I was ever of opinion, that if the person, even of a queen, was violated, she would debase her meanest subject by a marriage with him; and it was chiefly on this principle that I rejected Mr. Moreton.

I told

I told him, that I had invincible objections against a second marriage, which it would be in vain to endeavour to overcome.—He appeared dejected.—I conjured him not to let my resolution afflict him, as I should ever be happy in his society, and consider myself as his truest friend.—I also told him, that if it was not in his power to induce me to change my mind, that he might be assured, no one else could do it.

Mrs. Shelburn's health being now considerably better, she resolved on leaving Bath, as she impatiently longed to see her husband. I thought it most advisable to leave the place with her, as I must either have endured the pain of parting with Moreton, or subjected myself to conjectures on his account, which would have been highly disagreeable to me.

On our arrival in London, Mrs. Shelburn introduced me to her husband. He was possessed of a pleasing figure, and appeared to be amiable, and doatingly fond of her.—I rejoiced at the happiness

ness I had communicated, and was pleased at the restlessness and disgust which made me leave London, as it had, by introducing me to her acquaintance, given me an opportunity of being serviceable to a worthy couple.

My affection for Mrs. Shelburn's brother, almost every day increased; yet, whether it was owing to the novelty of a first attachment, certain it is that the pleasures attending it, were inferior to what I felt for Sir William; yet Moreton was, in every respect, his superior. There was more softness, more delicacy in his conduct, and his manners were the most gentle and unassuming that it is possible to conceive. In short, it was very natural, that Sir William should triumph over a heart that never before had been sensible to love. Moreton, however, was the man most likely to succeed him.—A woman that had once been betrayed by the artifices of a Harley, would look with disgust and hatred on all others who seemed to be of a similar disposition.

What

What your opinion of me, my dear sir, will be, I will not pretend to determine ; but I am fearful you will consider me as despicable and abandoned, when I confess that I was, in the end, on the same terms with Mr. Moreton as I had formerly been with Sir William.—The opinion which Dr. Young made Zanga express of women, I am apprehensive you will think too applicable to me.

“ When once the throbbing of the heart has broke
 “ The modest zone, with which it first was tied,
 “ Each man she meets will be a Carlos to her.”

It never, I can assure you, was my intention to have yielded ; yet, I know not why, I was insensible to those keen sensations of remorse, which I suffered in my first deviations from virtue, and I appeared to have nothing left me worth regretting ;—Sir William seemed to have deprived me of every idea of compunction.

Moreton was all assiduity and tenderness, his heart and happiness were centered in me. Certain it is, that I loved him,

him, yet my feelings were far inferior to what they had been.

It is needless to trouble you with a circumstantial recital of my weakness: you already know it.—I could not reflect on my conduct without blushing, yet I felt little remorse at continuing it.—How long I might have been happy with Moreton, I know not, but he was appointed to the command of a ship, and obliged to leave me. His reluctance, on the occasion, was equal to my own: tears streamed from both our eyes, and it was in vain that I begged him to resign the command; in that he was inexorable:—in short, amidst tears and sighs, we parted.—If ever man sincerely loved, I believe that he did.—A letter which I received from him, the night after he left me, was expressed in these words:

“ Scarcely can I believe it possible that
 “ I am separated from you, and still live.
 “ —I execrate the cruel necessity that
 “ parts us, I agitate myself with fruitless
 “ emotions, and suffer more than it is
 “ possible for me to express, or you to
 con-

“ conceive.—You blamed me, my dear,
 “ my lovely Amelia, for not accepting of
 “ your generous offer.—That your for-
 “ tune is sufficient for us both, I know
 “ —but how was it possible that I could
 “ consent that my love should wear the
 “ appearance of mean, or mercenary?—
 “ It would have seemed so like an inter-
 “ ested convenience, that my heart re-
 “ probated the idea. — Besides, my
 “ honour must have been forfeited had
 “ I renounced the profession to which I
 “ was bred, for the gratification of a sel-
 “ fish passion.—No! my beloved friend,
 “ whatever fate has destined for me, you
 “ never shall have cause to blush at your
 “ prepossession, or repent your partiality
 “ for me. The proofs of your love which
 “ you have blest me with, forbid my ex-
 “ pressing my fears for its continuance.
 “ Oh! for compassion’s sake, my best,
 “ my adored Amelia, condescend to re-
 “ member, that not only the happiness,
 “ but the existence of your Edward, de-
 “ pends upon your constancy, and that
 “ he could never support your loss. Re-
 “ collect that though he is absent from
 “ you, that your idea will ever attend
 “ him,

“ him, and animate him to deserve your
 “ love. Let your heart beat in unison
 “ with his, and when Heaven blesses him
 “ with the joy of once more beholding,
 “ and embracing you, believe me, no fe-
 “ licity on earth will be equal to that of
 “ your faithful
 “ MORETON.”

I read this letter with the greatest pleasure, and returned him an answer wrote as affectionately. I assured him of my constancy, and was convinced of his.—The only joy which I felt in his absence was the hope of meeting at a future period, and in the society of his amiable sister. I considered him, I said, as a man I could love without a blush, and whose conduct had taught me to esteem him.

I seldom went any where but to Mrs. Shelburn's—I seemed, indeed, to have renounced all my former acquaintance and amusements. But this inactive state of life was interrupted by an unexpected event: I received an account that Capt. Moreton, soon after his arrival at the
 West

West Indies, had been married to the daughter of an eminent planter there.

This shock was the more severe, as it was entirely unlooked for; but the pain it occasioned was not lasting: Sir William had reconciled me to falsehood, and what I had felt on his account, made every other uneasiness trivial.

LET-

L E T T E R III.

YOU will doubtless think, my dear sir, that I had suffered sufficiently to make me renounce the sex; but, accustomed to the habit of loving, I could not support the joyless languor of indifference—My heart required some object to exercise its tenderness on—I had been too long used to rest my happiness on one alone, to be contented with distant prospects of felicity, and to receive pleasure from a seclusion of the world. Had Sir William, or even Moreton, been constant to me, I had never forsaken them—but they both deserted me; and as I imagined I had a right to seek for happiness from others, I once more appeared in the world.

Amongst a crowd of new admirers, Colonel Iredell and Lord Fitzhubert, renewed their pretensions. Whether I was less delicate than before, or that the latter had acquired additional powers of pleasing,

pleasing, I will not pretend to determine; but I was very near giving him the preference, when I became acquainted with Lord Mountley.—I was ignorant of his real character, which was a contempt for women, and the highest veneration for his own person. His inconstancy and love for variety was so great, that the desertion of a woman almost succeeded the attainment of her. Yet his passion for the sex was so violent, that no arts were left unpracticed by him to attain his desires; and he would run into the most exorbitant expences, and submit to the most abject meannesses, to obtain *that* which, when possessed, he would abandon with the utmost indifference. No one knew so well to disguise his real sentiments as he did, and with no one could disguise be more unnecessary.

He was just returned from France, when I became acquainted with him; his person and appearance prepossessed me in his favour, and his manner was almost irresistible.—He soon distinguished me, and paid me those assiduities which were as flattering as pleasing. I enjoyed

enjoyed my conquest, I was transported at the thoughts of being loved by a man who appeared in every respect so amiable.—I admitted of his addresses, I returned his love, if that can be called so, which is transferred from one object to another. I imagined, at the time, it was love; but am now of opinion, that I never felt that passion but for Sir William.—How far I might have proceeded with him, would perhaps have been a doubt, had not a gentleman, whom he called his friend, and who also addressed me, on perceiving my partiality for his Lordship, let me into his private character, and convinced me, beyond conjecture of the truth of his accusation, by shewing me several letters that had been wrote to him, wherein he mentions many of his amours, their beginning and their end, and laments the changeableness of his nature, and his constitutional inclination for variety, which never would permit him, he said, to remain long attached to one object.

I made so much use of the information given me, as to entirely forbid Lord Mount-

Mountley's addresses, and left to his *trusty* friend to explain the cause, if he thought proper, of his Lordship's dismissal.—He also was forbid my house, as I did not chuse to be the rewarder of treachery ; besides, I was convinced, that the wretch who could violate a confidence reposed in him, could never be a generous lover.

I was grieved at my mistaken opinion of Lord Mountley, and wished he had been what I at first imagined : but my regret and disappointment soon vanished on my knowledge of a Mr. Cleveland.

There was not any thing either in this gentleman's person, or manner, that would, on a first acquaintance, prepossess you in his favour. You must be perfectly familiar with him before you would even notice him, and then your utmost praise would be to acknowledge he was pleasing.—He had no pretensions to elegance or beauty ; his only attraction was a pair of fine hazle eyes, that seemed to express every sentiment of his soul, and was taught to say, not only
what

what he felt, but what he would wish to make you believe he did feel.

His understanding was like his person:—he would never say any thing you could condemn, and seldom what you could admire.—I never saw a man that so much improved upon your knowledge of him.—He was possessed of a just and generous heart, but was a perfect slave to his passions, which were the wildest and most inordinate in nature.—Joined to all this, his temper was far from a good one.

You would think this man was very little calculated to make an impression on my heart.—I beheld him, indeed, a long time with indifference; but accustomed to see him often, and for a length of time, I began to consider him as pleasing, and found every day that he became more and more so.—He knew himself so well, that he was some time before he made a declaration of his passion, except by his eyes—which pleaded most eloquently in his favour.

When

When he first acknowledged his love to me, I could scarcely believe it possible that it was Cleveland who was speaking; as on every other subject his manner was trifling, and his discourse far from entertaining; but on that he seemed to be animated with an uncommon spirit, and could not fail of inspiring, what he knew so well how to express.—I returned his love—he seemed transported.—In short, the study of that passion, appeared to have been all that had ever engaged his attention, and in that it must be owned he was a proficient.—My affection for him would have induced me to have done every thing in my power to make him happy, had not his own honour, or call it what you please, been the obstacle to his happiness.

His constitution was naturally a good one, but I have reason to believe had been impaired by excesses.

For sometime past, his health had been on the decline, and I observed him frequently melancholy; and though he was still tender, and assiduous, yet his
mind

mind seemed to be oppressed and unhappy. I had frequently intreated him to explain the cause, but his general answer was, that illness ever distresses the spirits.—I was at length satisfied with the truth of what he said, and enquired no farther.

One evening, as I was alone with him, we seemed to have forgot every part of the creation, but each other.—He was uncommonly tender, my heart was melted to a degree of softness, and we were almost lost in the delirium of love, when we were disturbed by the arrival of company, who, through a mistake in my orders, had gained admittance.—I know not in what manner I received them, but I thought at the time I could have dispensed with the favour of their visit.

After staying about an hour, Cleveland took his leave, which I was not a little astonished at. I expected him, however, to return at the time he thought I should be alone, but in that I was mistaken and disappointed. I saw nothing more of him the whole evening, and the

next morning came the following letter from him:

“ But for the fortunate interruption
“ we met with last night, I had been the
“ most criminal, and by this time, the
“ most wretched of men.—Not that I
“ can now pretend to happiness, but I
“ have the consolation of knowing that
“ I have not involved you in misery.—
“ This language will appear astonishing
“ to you; but my dear Amelia, what
“ would your sensations have been, if
“ after having granted every thing to
“ make me happy, you had seen me
“ overwhelmed with misery and confu-
“ sion?—This would undoubtedly have
“ been the case, the moment that the
“ delirium of passion had subsided.

“ You have frequently observed me
“ melancholy—I attributed it to the
“ power of illness, and in some measure
“ it was so; for the idea of an approach-
“ ing dissolution awakened me to a con-
“ sciousness of my faults, and the recol-
“ lection of them was attended with self-
“ accusation and repentance.

“ If

“ If it will not be taking up too much
“ of your time, suffer me to relate some
“ part of my history, which will serve
“ as an explanation of what I have been
“ saying.

“ By the death of my father, I was
“ left to the guidance of my own incli-
“ nation, when very young, and posses-
“ sed of a genteel though not a large
“ fortune. My constitution was good,
“ and my attachment to your sex, was
“ perhaps as strong as it is possible for
“ man to feel. I formed various con-
“ nexions of the kind, which injured
“ my fortune and impaired my health.

“ I now resolved upon a more regular
“ way of life, and accordingly renounced
“ all those whose careffes were to be pur-
“ chased, and who, in the midst of every
“ endearment, consider a man as an
“ object of hatred and detestation, ra-
“ ther than of love.

“ I soon formed an acquaintance with
“ a young lady (excuse my not mention-
“ ing her name) which terminated in a

“ closer intimacy. Her manners were
 “ uncorrupted and innocent, and her
 “ conduct blameless, till her fatal par-
 “ tiality for me. I was so sensible of her
 “ worth and affection, that I resolved to
 “ confine myself to her alone, and confi-
 “ der her in every respect as my wife.—
 “ To marriage I had ever an utter aver-
 “ sion, and thought, whilst I continued
 “ attached to her alone, I was scarcely
 “ guilty of injustice.

“ I was thus circumstanced when I
 “ became acquainted with you : I paid
 “ you that admiration which all must do
 “ who see you, but was not even appre-
 “ hensive of your inspiring softer senti-
 “ ments, from a full persuasion that my
 “ engagement would sufficiently guard
 “ me against your beauties.—Chance
 “ brought us frequently together, when
 “ to know you, and not to love, I found
 “ to be impossible.

“ For some time, I had not resolution
 “ to declare my passion : I was too sensi-
 “ ble of my own unworthiness to think
 “ of succeeding, but your smiles encou-
 “ raged

“ raged the declaration. I owned I lov-
“ ed you, and in the first transports of
“ making you sensible of it, I forgot the
“ cruel barrier there was between us.
“ The delusion perhaps would have con-
“ tinued for ever, but the tender re-
“ proaches of the amiable girl whom I
“ had injured, and who perceived my
“ neglect and frequent absence from her,
“ recalled me to a recollection of the
“ ungenerous part I was acting.

“ To renounce you, at the moment I
“ had gained your affection, I felt to be
“ impossible. The conflicts of my mind
“ added much to the destruction of my
“ health, which was before greatly im-
“ paired; and when you observed my
“ dejection, I attributed it, as you know,
“ to that cause.

“ Last night, my dear Mrs. Ledwich,
“ your charms had softened me into a
“ forgetfulness of every thing.—Never
“ did I before experience such ecstasies
“ of passion, as you inspired; and but
“ for the intrusion we met with, we had
“ been both undone. You was deceiv-
“ ed

“ed into the opinion that I was per-
 “fectly disengaged.—My heart is yours,
 “and my person is free—but I am bound
 “by honour and humanity, nor would I
 “for worlds violate those ties.

“Circumstanced then as I am, can
 “you wonder at my being rejoiced that
 “I was prevented from involving you in
 “my distress?—For I must honestly de-
 “clare, that had fate permitted me to
 “have enjoyed those transports which I
 “was so near possessing, I could not have
 “been wholly yours ; that regret and re-
 “morse would ever have attended me,
 “and embittered my tenderest enjoy-
 “ments.—Passionately, madly as I love
 “you, I never could have forsaken one
 “who trusted in me, nor abandoned to
 “ruin, a faithful and confiding heart.
 “—If I could, I am sure you would
 “condemn me, and with justice despise
 “me for a falsehood, which nothing but
 “your own charms could have occasion-
 “ed.—I am sensible you are deserving
 “of every thing—and lament, sincerely
 “lament, that I unfortunately have only
 “my heart to bestow.—Pity then a
 “wretch

“wretch who stands in need of your
“compassion, and let the acknowledg-
“ment of my unworthiness, be a proof
“of the sincerity of my love.”

I sent him back an answer, wherein I told him, that I admired his candour, but lamented that he had kept me ignorant of his situation, till he had gained my affection; but that I should never subject him again to the inconvenience of contending passions, as I should henceforth consider him as a stranger to me.

He tried every means in his power to renew his intimacy with me, but I obstinately persisted in refusing it.—I make no doubt but he repented sending me that letter, but I suppose it was owing to the influence of the then prevailing passion, which undoubtedly was pity for the young lady he mentioned.—I knew him well enough to be convinced, that the present emotion of his heart would be predominant over every sensation, and let it be of what kind it would, at that time every other would be forgotten.

Thus

Thus you see, my dear Sir, that I lost two lovers, either of which I could have been very well contented with. The first by the treachery of a man that he confided in, and the second by his own confession. I regretted the loss of Cleveland far the most, as no man could do greater justice to the tender pleadings than he did.—On the subject of love, the most interesting to me of any other, I found him indeed a complete master.

LET-

LETTER IV.

I Was forming a resolution to return into the country, and renounce the sex for ever; when an American gentleman, with his wife, son and daughter, came over to England, and were lodged at the house of an intimate friend of mine.

The old gentleman was one of that kind of men, whom all speak well of, because he never could enter into a competition with themselves. His abilities were of the plainest kind—or rather he had no abilities at all;—his head would not suffer him to do mischief, nor his heart to do good: in short, he was harmless for want of the power to be otherwise.

His wife was much of the same kind, and as *he* was called a *worthy man*, *she* had gained the appellation of a *good kind of woman*, though neither, that I could ever discover, were possessed of any one

good quality, or ever did a generous action; but it was to their insignificancy alone they were indebted, as none ever thought it worth their while to speak ill of them.

Their son was very unlike them in every respect; so much, that I was almost tempted to believe there must be a mistake in his birth that was then undiscovered.

With regard to their daughter, her person was far from agreeable, nor was it entirely disgusting. She affected to be a wit, but could never reach higher than a flippant pertness, which at times amounted almost to rudeness; and if it had not been for her very great aptitude at mischief, I should, without hesitation, have pronounced her dull and stupid.

The son was rather of a pleasing figure, and nature had bestowed on him all that sprightliness which his sister seemed so desirous to possess. His understanding was more showy than solid, yet was by no means despicable. His temper

per was a remarkably good one, and regularly the same; he had strong passions, but little sensibility, and was besides wild and inconstant.

The name of this family was Levingstone; and though there was nothing very entertaining in them, yet they helped to amuse me. I was diverted with the absurdities of the daughter, and the lively sallies of the son served to support my spirits. He affected to be deeply enamoured, and declared his passion with so much impetuosity, and seemed so much astonished at the rejection of it, that I plainly saw he had assured himself of success.

A young gentleman, who was frequently with the Levingstones, I beheld with a more favourable eye. He was also an American. He had a good flow of spirits, without their running into those extravagancies, which was too frequently the case with young Levingstone. — Mr. Nugent's understanding kept him within proper bounds, and he diverted without wearying.

At

At the time I rejected Mr. Levingstone, the other had declared his passion for me, and I had acknowledged my approbation of him.

That my taste was confirmed by the opinion of others, I had not much cause to doubt.—Miss Levingstone honoured him with frequent glances, and, whenever he was present, did all in her power to overcome her natural dullness, and affected to be witty.—She pretended a great friendship for me, the sincerity of which she afterwards gave me a proof of.

Mr. Nugent pressed me on the subject of marriage, and I returned the usual answer, that I had resolved against it. This information had a very different effect on him to what it before had on Moreton. Nugent attempted, indeed, to overcome my reasons, but I had penetration to discover, that in spite of all his art to conceal it, he was not displeased at my persevering in my resolution.—Marriage, I suppose, was no more agreeable to his inclination than mine, and he was well enough acquainted with the sex,

to

to know, that a woman, who resolves against it, and yet declares a partiality for a man, and allows him to visit her, may be obtained upon easier terms.

I was piqued at Nugent's indifference at my refusal, and almost resolved to discard him; but something pleaded in his favour, and I forgave him. The pride which made me first displeased with him, forbade my mentioning my displeasure, and it subsided without his knowledge of it.

Miss Levingstone urged me strenuously in her brother's favour. She told me how much he loved me, and how pleased she should be, at having it in her power to call me sister. She enlarged on his merits, and said, that she never knew George attached to any one but me. The young gentleman seconded his sister's eloquence, but both were unavailing. I was indeed so tired with their importunities on the subject, that I made my visits to the family much less frequent than usual.

I was

I was scarcely ever at home but Mr. Nugent was with me.—This Miss Levingstone received information of ; and one day, when he went to call upon her brother, she found an opportunity of speaking to him alone.—She asked him, when he had seen me last ?—He returned an indirect answer. She was greatly astonished, she said, at my long absence from the house, and more particularly, she added, considering the engagements that were between me and her brother.—Mr. Nugent felt his curiosity excited, and said, he was ignorant that Mr. Levingstone and I were any more than common acquaintance.

“ Lord, Sir,” said she, “ Mrs. Ledwich has been engaged to George before she ever saw you, and he is a great favourite with her.” Nugent scarcely knew how to credit what had been said to him, as he had never observed any thing but civility on my side ; and as I never infringed the strictest rules of politeness to him, he had not betrayed any of these little petulancies and jealousies which more clearly demonstrate love than

than the most studied affectation of tenderness.—However, he resolved to be convinced of the truth of what he had heard, and on his seeing Mr. Levingstone begged to be informed of what nature his acquaintance was with me.

The young man, who had been tutored by his sister, and was led to imagine that Mr. Nugent's addresses were disagreeable to me, and that the only way to free me from them was to declare that I had expressed a partiality for himself, imagined that he was doing me a favour, in confirming to Mr. Nugent, what his sister had told him. I have before observed he was possessed of an excellent temper, but that his spirits were so very uncontroulable, they carried him beyond his understanding. He never thought—and was therefore easily imposed on.

When Mr. Nugent found that his friend repeated what his sister had told him, he had not a doubt remaining of the truth, as he had never known Mr. Levingstone guilty of a falshood. He
had

had too much pride to confess the pain he suffered, but forcing a smile, wished him joy, and pretending business of consequence, left him.——He did not condescend to visit, or even expostulate with me. He wrote me a few lines, wherein he told me, that his ignorance of my engagements to Mr. Levingstone must plead his excuse for addressing me ; that he never wished to infringe on the property of another, much less on that of his friend ; and concluded with wishing me happy.

I wrote him a justification of my conduct, and sent it by one of my own servants, with orders to wait for an answer. In his way to the house, he met Mr. Nugent, and delivered him my letter and message. He took the letter, read it with a smile of contempt, told the servant it required no answer, then turned from him, humming a tune, and tore the letter he had just received, into pieces, and threw them on the ground.

This account enraged me far more than it affected me, my pride was more wounded

wounded than my heart. A short time after I received a letter from Mr. Levingstone, giving an account of the whole transaction. This explained Mr. Nugent's conduct, but did not excuse it, and I sent back a letter of his unopened, which came to me the same day.—His friend had related to him the artifices of his sister, and though he used every means in his power to bring about a reconciliation, I had been too grossly insulted ever to forgive him.—I dropped all communication with the Levingstones, and notwithstanding the importunities of the whole family, I renounced all acquaintance with them.

LET-

LETTER V.

MRS. Shelburn was safely delivered of a boy, to which I had promised, before its birth, to stand godmother. She now sent to me to fulfil my engagement. I went there ; and as there is generally a great deal of company, and freedom of conversation, on days of that kind, I found that there was so then.

Mr. Shelburn had been promoted to a much better place, which gave me great satisfaction, as my esteem for him, and his amiable wife, was very great, which has continued to this day ; for out of all my former friends and acquaintance, she is the only one that I hold any correspondence with.

There was a gentleman present that stood for her son, who helped to make the day pass more agreeably to me. It would be ridiculous to pretend that I loved him at that time ; but certain it is, the

the heart that has been frequently engaged, receives impressions with more facility, and resigns them with less regret, than it does on a first attachment. When we are deprived of the primary object of our affection, there does not appear to be in nature any thing that can console us for the loss; a second, and a third, makes us less difficult, and less delicate, till at last, provided the passion of love can be kept alive, we are almost indifferent who inspires it.—Should this be doubted, let those ladies who have felt more than one prepossession, examine their hearts, and they will then acknowledge the truth of this observation.

If I was pleased with Mr. Crofdale (the gentleman before-mentioned) he appeared to be no less so with me.—He was about eight and twenty, tall and well proportioned, his features regular and pleasing, more serious than lively, his understanding good, and improved by education: he had besides the character of being just, generous, constant, and steady.

When

When evening came, and I took my leave of Mr. Shelburn, Mr. Crofdale accompanied me home, and the next morning he waited on me to acquire after my health. I thanked him for his politeness, and gave him a general invitation, which he accepted of.

I was very much pleased with him, and I have reason to believe he was no less so with me; for had he not passionately loved me, he never would have acted the part he did.

My time was spent delightfully with him, I had in his affection all that my heart could desire; he was my friend, my constant companion, my lover. I was a little surprised, indeed, that he never mentioned marriage: his addresses were ardent and passionate, but that word never escaped him. A short time, however, explained that to me, but involved me in real misery.

I one day received a letter from an unknown hand, informing me Mr. Crofdale was married, and his wife lived in the country.

country.—I did not pay much regard to this information; I considered it as the invention of falshood and calumny, in which truth had no share, and scarcely thought it worth my while to mention it to Mr. Crosdale. However, when he came in the afternoon, I shewed him the letter.—His countenance instantly changed, tears fell from his eyes, and the probability of his heart prevented him from denying the charge.

I was distressed beyond description, but would not add to his sorrows by those reproaches which he merited from me.

He fell at my feet, and entreated me to pardon the deception he had been guilty of; acknowledged that he really was married, but that he had been drawn into it, at a time when he was intoxicated; that he had made his wife a very genteel allowance, but insisted on it that she should live in the country, and never claim him for her husband. He protested, on his honour, that he did not lay her under those restrictions for the sake of entering into a second engagement,
but

but that all his friends were ignorant of his marriage, and he was unwilling to own so unworthy a connection ; that he had studiously avoided all intercourse with the sex, since his union, till his unfortunate meeting with me at Mr. Shelburn's ; that the impetuosity of his passion triumphed over his reason, but he solemnly protested that his first intentions were only sometimes to have the pleasure of seeing me, and that he never meant to make a declaration of his love ; adding, that he should not have broke that resolution, if he had not imagined he perceived in my manner, that he was not disagreeable to me, and that the joy of that overcame every consideration.— He entreated me still to permit him to see me, and swore, in the most solemn manner, that if I would grant him that indulgence, he would never, by any word or action, attempt to express his passion for me.

I participated in the distress he seemed to suffer whilst he was speaking, but though he was assured of his own resolution, I was in doubt of mine.

I told

I told him, I freely forgave the dissimulation he had practised towards me; but that had he treated me with more confidence, it would have been happier for us both; that the acknowledgment of an error was rather too late, if it came after detection, and appeared to be more the effect of necessity than choice. That he had contracted an unfortunate engagement I should ever lament, as it had placed an insuperable barrier between us;—that I could not consent to see him again, for after the tender light in which we had beheld one another, there would be little satisfaction resulting from our being merely acquaintance; and that to meet on any other terms would be criminal.

I rose to leave him, he attempted to answer and detain me, but the power failed him.—I never saw a man more truly afflicted; yet my resolution did not abandon me: I left him, and threw myself on the bed, where I gave vent to my tears and sighs.—He stayed some time after I was gone, but at last left the house.

I suf-

I suffered a great deal in losing him—but I could not reconcile it to myself to have done otherwise; for though he was deluded into the marriage, he was still the property of another, and remorse would have been the attendant of any intercourse with him.

He tried once more to get admitted to me, but, on finding me inexorable, he dropped all thoughts of it, and went into the country, but whether or not to the woman he was married to, I do not know.—I afterwards learnt, that the cause of my receiving the letter before-mentioned, was owing to a friend of his wife's, who was in London, and sent her word of every thing relative to him, and among the rest, of his frequent visits to me.

There seemed, I thought, to be a fatality attending me, and that I never was to form a lasting engagement, though it was my wish to do it.—I had before yielded to the temptation to which accident or chance had exposed me, but I now studiously fought it.

L E T.

LETTER VI.

I Once more resolved on leaving London, when I again met with Lord Fitzhubert; he that had been so often refused, was at last accepted:—but I found that the man, who in company was so lively and entertaining, the dullest companion in nature, in a *tête-à-tête*. He was never happy to be alone with me, and as if conscious of his own insignificance, was eternally proposing some party of dissipation.—This was by no means what I desired; I wished for a social companion, and a friend who would be interested in all that related to me.—I found it impossible to expect that from Fitzhubert, for that he was only an attendant on public places, which I by no means wanted; I therefore gave him his final discharge.—His dismissal occasioned me no uneasiness, for he was not calculated to make me happy.

I grew at this last disappointment restless and dissatisfied: I had nothing now

to interest or amuse me. That part of the sex whom I had preferred, had either deserted me, or I was obliged myself to discard, on account of their vices, or prior engagements.

That resolution which Lord Fitzhubert had induced me to defer, I now resolved to put in practice.—I waited on Mrs. Shelburn to ask her to accompany me to Tunbridge, but I found her so busied in the cares of her family, and so thoroughly domesticated, that it was in vain to urge her. I envied her situation. She had, by marrying the man she loved, secured to herself a friend and companion :—in the pleasures of her family, her youth would be a second time renewed : I considered myself as an unconnected, friendless being, and shuddered at my own situation. I exclaimed with Thompson—

“ Where now, ye lying vanities of life !
 “ Ye ever-tempting, ever-cheating train !
 “ Where are ye now ? And what is your amount ?
 “ Vexation, disappointment, and remorse.
 “ Sad, sickening thought ! and yet deluded man,
 “ A scene of crude disjointed visions past,
 “ And broken slumbers, rises still resolved,
 “ With new-flushed hopes, to run the giddy round.”

In

In every attempt after happiness, I had been disappointed, yet I still persevered in the pursuit; and as I could not engage Mrs. Shelburn to accompany me to Tunbridge, I set off for that place by myself.—I parted from her with infinite regret; her society was always a pleasure to me, and if I could have been reconciled to myself, I might have been contented with her friendship.

At Tunbridge, my fortune, and the figure I made, procured me respect wherever I appeared, and my person secured to me the admiration of the men. I met at that place with many of my former acquaintance, and passed my time tolerably agreeable.—Among the men, there were several who made pretensions to my heart, but there were two only who kept me in doubt which to give the preference to, and they were widely different from each other.

Mr. Bradley was turned of forty, but having lived a temperate and regular life, did not appear to be much more than thirty.—He was an entertaining companion, possessed of an excellent heart and

understanding, and his person very agreeable.

Mr. Campbell was an officer in the army, and just turned of twenty.—He was remarkably handsome, and perfectly sensible of it.—He had all that levity and impetuosity which youth and affluence generally inspire.—As to his heart, he had no settled principles or ideas, so I was in ignorance of that.—I was weak enough at last to decide in his favour, and the consequence was, that I was deserted in a fortnight for a new face that at that time made its appearance. From that instant we sunk into perfect strangers, without even the formality of an excuse on his side, or the attempt at an explanation on mine. I now repented the preference I had given him to Mr. Bradley, but it was too late to retract; and as Young says—

“ If you resent, and wish a woman ill,

“ But turn her o’er one moment to her will.”

If I was here, sir, disappointed in forming an acquaintance with one of your sex, that promised to be lasting, I was soon nearly recompensed by an intimacy with one of my own.

A lady,

A lady, whose name was Molefworth, lived next door to me.—She appeared dejected, and I felt myself interested in her fate.

There is I know not what in our dispositions, that naturally attracts us towards objects in distress:—the gay and happy we behold with indifference, the melancholy and unhappy with anxiety. I cannot believe that this sympathy proceeds from the *goodness* of the heart, and I am unwilling to suppose that it is owing to the *badness* of it—that is a point I cannot pretend to determine; I only know that I at first felt a prepossession in Mrs. Molefworth's favour, which was much improved, when chance brought us acquainted with each other.—This acquaintance I audiously endeavoured to improve into an intimacy, but had the mortification of finding her rather backward in accepting it:—however, at length my perseverance overcame her reserve, and we were frequently together.

Calling on her one day, when I imagined she did not expect visitors, I found
her

her in tears. I pressed to know the cause of her distress, from motives of friendship, more than curiosity, and offered her every assistance I could give her.

She thanked me in the politest manner, for interesting myself about her, but assured me it was not in the power of fate itself to save her from misery. I again entreated her to make me a confidante in her sorrows, and gave every assurance that she might do it with safety.

She answered with a sigh, that they who had once been betrayed, had nothing further to fear ; but that as I was so generous to concern myself in her sorrows, if I would favour her with my attention, she would relate some part of her story to me, to convince me that she had reason for her complaints.

I bowed an acknowledgment for the favour intended, and she proceeded.

“ I was possessed of two blessings, which so completed my happiness, that I sought for no other, nor had I a wish beyond them :——treachery and falsehood deprived

deprived me of both, and I was reduced to despise the memory of what I once had loved, as well as to lament my loss.— But I beg your pardon, I am troubling you with my sorrows, instead of informing you of their cause.

“ I had many admirers, but Mr. Moleworth was the only one that made any impression on my heart.—I loved—I almost idolized him.—We were married, and for months our felicity was perfect.

“ I had, unfortunately, on a visit with me, a young lady, whose name was Johnson, for whom I had for some years entertained a sincere friendship, and who was engaged to a gentleman, whom she professed to be exceedingly attached to. He was very much enamoured with her, and their marriage was only delayed on account of some prudential reasons.

“ I was likely to make an addition to my family, when I perceived an alteration in my husband's conduct. He was petulant to me, and seemed to be far from happy

happy himself. I was ignorant what to attribute this alteration to, as I was not conscious of giving offence. My most earnest entreaties to be acquainted with the cause, were disregarded; and I was told that the imagined change in him, proceeded from my own capricious fancifulness. If after that, I ventured farther to expostulate, he would tell me, with a frown, that I had no just reason to complain at his behaviour, and that since he was to be catechised about it, he should leave me till I had learnt to be more reasonable. It was very seldom after this, that I could persuade him to give me more of his company, he embracing every opportunity to be absent from me.

“ I grieved incessantly, and the knowledge of my condition did not induce him to treat me with more consideration. — I went out but seldom, having neither spirits or inclination to do it. One day, however, being particularly pressed by a lady, with whom I had long been intimate, I accepted of her invitation. My husband as usual refused to accompany

pany me, and the young lady, who was with me on a visit, as before mentioned, desired to be excused, as she expected the gentleman whom I before told you she was engaged to.—Too sure he came, but little was he expected.

“On my return in the evening, I found every thing in confusion, no one could give me a direct answer to any question. I was surprised at the disorder which was evident in every thing, and my own mind, without being sensible for what cause, seemed also to partake of it.

“I was going into my own room, when my woman endeavoured to prevent my entrance. I pushed her from me, in an agony of suspense and terror, and rushing into the room, beheld Mr. Moleworth in bed, with his head supported on Miss Johnson’s bosom. The paleness of death seemed to have overspread his countenance, whilst the face of his attendant was bathed in tears. I gave a loud scream at the sight, and sunk upon the floor. My maid, who had followed me in, raised me up, for Miss Johnson seemed

seemed insensible both to my presence and distress. Mr. Moleworth having ordered the servant to leave the room, he with a faint voice begged me to come near him. I approached the bed, he held out a hand to me, the other had hold of Miss Johnson's.

“ I suppose, said he, you are not ignorant of the cause of my approaching death—my guilt has brought its punishment with it. I know the gentleness of your disposition too well, to be apprehensive of any reproaches from you, and I expect from your justice and humanity, your forgiveness and commiseration of this unhappy girl, who is more than an equal sufferer with you.

“ I started with astonishment, and quitting the hand of Mr. Moleworth, I instantly turned to Miss Johnson. For mercy's sake, said I to her, explain this dreadful mystery, whilst I have power to hear you.—She was silent.—My husband desired her to relate it to me, that I might bless him with my forgiveness before he died.—She then, with a voice inter-

interrupted with tears and sighs, informed me, that Mr. Moleworth and herself had long been on the most intimate terms; that her staying at home that day, was a concerted plan; that unexpectedly the gentleman, to whom she was engaged, had come in, and surprised them in a manner which left him no room to doubt the terms of intimacy they were on; that he immediately drew, that Mr. Moleworth did the same, and that, before her cries had brought any one to their assistance, my husband had been desperately wounded, and her lover had effected his escape.

“ Gracious God ! exclaimed I, what am I doomed to suffer ! Mr. Moleworth entreated me to be calm. Believe me, Louisa, said he, I am too sensible of the wrongs I have committed, nor can your reproaches make me feel them more acutely ; but I shall die for my offences, and let the forfeit of my life serve as an expiation for them. He took my hand and put it into Miss Johnson’s : I drew it from her, by an involuntary emotion. Mr. Moleworth sighed.

“ Most

“ Most people, said he, have the satisfaction of having their last moments softened by the presence of their friends, whilst I have only those by me that in my life I have injured, and whom my death will consign to misery. You consider yourself as unhappy, Louisa; but has not Olivia greater cause for sorrow? Every one that hears the story will pity you; you have the friendship of your family, and the innocence of your own heart to support you, whilst this poor, deluded, and unhappy girl will be abhorred and detested by the whole world, because she could not withstand the solicitations of a man she loved. He pressed her hand to his heart. Forgive me, Olivia, and have resolution to support a censure which, but for me, you never would have incurred.

“ The superior tenderness which Mr. Moleworth shewed to this ungrateful girl, even down to the last moments of his life, was so clearly manifested, that it was almost more than I had resolution to support.

“ To

“To tell you what I suffer, said I to him, would seem like an accusation of your conduct, and perhaps add to your distress : but, for pity’s sake, bestow on me some little marks of your regard, that I may not have your loss embittered by the remembrance of an indifference which you carried with you to the grave.

“I know not what answer he would have made, but the surgeon at that moment came in, and wished Miss Johnson and myself to retire. After examining his wounds, he pronounced one of them to be mortal, and that it was impossible his patient could live two days.

“I sat up with him that night.—Miss Johnson would do the same. He appeared the whole time to be almost insensible, and scarcely spoke, but sighed incessantly. The following morning was just the same, when towards evening he seemed to have regained his recollection, and putting back the curtain, he made a motion with his hand for us to come to him.—We flew to his bed-side.

“I feel,

“ I feel, said he, I have not long to live, nor would life be desirable, but for the apprehensions of eternity. Unhappy Olivia, thou unfortunate victim to my passion! Pardon the wretch who has ruined thee. And you, my dear Louisa, my amiable and unhappy wife, do not execrate me, nor teach our infant, who will soon behold the light, to detest its father’s memory.

“ Be more just to me, answered I, than to suppose it. Here on my knees I swear, that I as freely forgive you every offence committed against me, as I wish to have my own offences forgiven.

“ He embraced me; he laid his dying head upon my bosom—he looked at Olivia.

“ Who will protect *her*? said he; who will guard *her* from vice and misery? for every crime she commits, the account and expiation will be required of me. He groaned deeply. I was softened at his situation, and forgot every thing but his misery. I gave my hand to Miss
Johnson.

Johnson.—I will be her friend, said I.—I will endeavour, by every means in my power, to secure her from infamy and distress.—The expiring ingrate pressed my hand feebly to his breast, murmured a blessing on us both, and expired.

“I cannot describe to you what I suffered: I was for two months entirely divested of reason, at which period my senses returned, but returned to renew my affliction; for the recollection of my misfortune had almost reduced me to the same situation again.

“I was soon after delivered of a dead child, and for some time my life was judged to be in danger. When I had a little regained my recollection, I wondered I never saw Miss Johnson, I enquired for her, and was told that she had quitted the house soon after my husband’s interment, but had left a letter, which it had been thought adviseable not to deliver to me. I asked for it, and as I have it by me, I will read it to you.”

“I am

—“ I am sensible that I merit your ha-
 “ tred, and that the sight of me would
 “ aggravate your sorrows. The promise
 “ you made to Mr. Moleworth was out
 “ of compassion to his situation, not
 “ friendship to me. I am confident you
 “ would fulfil your engagement, but I
 “ will not put it to the trial, as the per-
 “ formance of it would be adding to that
 “ grief, of which, alas! I have been the
 “ sole occasion.

“ If I could hope that I might obtain
 “ your forgiveness, it would be some al-
 “ leviation to my misery, which is at
 “ present almost insupportable. In the
 “ midst of your distress you have inno-
 “ cence, and the rectitude of your own
 “ heart to support you, whilst guilt and
 “ infamy weigh me down, and double
 “ every torment.

“ I have not any thing to plead in my
 “ own justification; the knowledge of
 “ Mr. Moleworth's engagements ought
 “ to have guarded my heart against his
 “ attractions, and strengthened my mind
 “ to resist him.

“ I mean

“ I mean to retire from the world, and
 “ devote the remainder of my days to
 “ penitence and prayer; and to beg of
 “ Heaven to efface from my heart the
 “ criminal passion to which I am a prey.

“ Suffer me to conjure you to vouch-
 “ safe your pity and forgiveness to me:
 “ forget that you have ever known me.
 “ But that I fear is impossible, as every
 “ sigh and tear will teach you to recur
 “ back to the cause, and recall to your
 “ memory that accursed wretch, who
 “ has involved herself, and all who know
 “ her, in misery and ruin.

“ One thing more, and I have done
 “ for ever.

“ Pardon the unhappy youth who was
 “ the murderer of your husband: and if
 “ it ever should be in your power to call
 “ him to answer for the crime, in the
 “ name of humanity I conjure you to
 “ spare him, and not punish the effects
 “ of jealous frenzy, but pity a too sin-
 “ cere attachment felt for an unworthy
 “ object. Your happiness will be my
 “ constant

“constant prayer; that, and the forgiveness of my offences, are the only wishes I can form.”

“I was very unhappy on reading this letter; I freely forgave her; and resolved, if it ever lay in my power to punish her lover, that I would do my utmost not to use it against him.

“Contrary to the expectations of my physicians I recovered; and when able to bear the fatigue of travelling, I came to this place: not from any hope of receiving benefit from it, but if possible to divert my thoughts from a subject on which they are unceasingly engaged.

“You see, my dear Mrs. Ledwich,” continued Mrs. Moleworth, “that I do not complain without reason, nor is it in the power of any earthly occurrence to restore me my peace.”

I thanked her for the confidence she had reposed in me, and wished it had been in my power to have afforded her consolation, but I knew that to be impossible. I was sensible of the truth of her
own

own observation, that it was not in the power of fate itself to relieve her; I therefore sighed, and was silent.

From this time Mrs. Molesworth and I were seldom asunder, and our intimacy seemed to be productive of mutual pleasure. I believe it softened her anxiety, and I am sure it relieved me from a state of mind by no means enviable.

She frequently recurred back to the history of her misfortunes, and I listened to her with an attention which does not always exist after the curiosity has been satisfied; but which is more flattering to the distressed than any other assiduity or mark of friendship whatever.

She was far from enjoying a good state of health, and I endured a thousand fears and anxieties on her account. She appeared to be every thing to me, and my apprehensions of losing her destroyed my tranquillity. For Mrs. Shelburn I had a very sincere regard, but her husband and increasing family in a very great measure detached her from me. Mrs. Molesworth

was

was in the same situation as myself: the world was not any thing to her, nor was she any thing to the world. The commiseration which I felt for her distresses had endeared me to her, and the state of mind which I was in, any one that seemed to be attached to me, I could not be indifferent to.

Our friendship continued for some time, and ended not but with her life. Whilst she lived I slighted the addresses of all who strove to engage my affection; but on her decease I was in the same joyless situation which her society had relieved me from.

You must excuse my not dwelling on the circumstances of her death: the recollection of it is attended with too much pain. I shall only say, she died in my arms, and seemed transported at her deliverance from a world where she had not any thing to regret leaving.

L E T.

L E T T E R VII.

SOON after Mrs. Moleworth's interment, I left Tunbridge, and repaired to my country seat; that place which had first given me to Sir William, and where I lost him. I felt my melancholy increase on my first arrival there, but it insensibly subsided. I renewed my acquaintance with the neighbouring gentlemen and ladies, whom I had formerly slighted, and found them more agreeable than I at first expected.

Sir Robert Dixon was an old bachelor, and had a very fine seat almost adjoining to my own. As he had no children, he designed to divide his fortune between a nephew and niece of his; and as the former was his sister's, and the latter his brother's child, he was in hopes, by their being brought up together, they might feel an inclination for each other, which might terminate in marriage. He had prudence enough to keep this a secret from both of them, for fear that a perverseness and spirit of contradiction, so

so inherent to human nature, should, when they believed they were designed for each other, be productive of hatred, instead of love.

Sir Robert had many peculiarities, but was generous, benevolent to excess, and free from ostentation. He was satisfied with relieving the distresses of the indigent, but did not want their acknowledgments, or that it should be known to the world.

His niece, Miss Dixon, was eighteen, tall and well made, but there was a bashfulness about her, that amounted almost to awkwardness, which took greatly from her natural perfections. She had an excellent understanding, her expressions were correct, and the turn of her thoughts lively and pleasing : but her timidity prevented her discovering her perfections but to those with whom she had long been acquainted. She has frequently sat silent, and heard the most ridiculous opinions advanced, and the grossest absurdities of ignorance confidently asserted, when it has been in her power to have exposed them, had not an unaccountable diffidence at those times prevented her.

Sir

Sir Robert's nephew, Mr. Manley, was not inferior to his fair cousin, neither in personal perfections, or mental abilities; but as he had seen rather more of the world, he delivered his opinions, which were generally just, with confidence, though free from assurance. Whenever he contradicted it was with politeness; and if it was proved to him he was in an error, he submitted with the best grace imaginable.

This family was the most pleasing to me of any that I had met with. I strove, by every art in my power, to teach Miss Dixon a proper opinion of herself, and in some measure succeeded.

Mr. Manley paid me the most distinguishing assiduities, but before I encouraged him, I resolved to enter into a strict examination of his conduct to his cousin, and observe if there was any thing more than friendship between them. It succeeded to my wish, and I imagined that I perceived in their behaviour, the most perfect indifference to each other; I therefore made no scruple to receive his addresses.

I must

I must confess I felt a degree of shame and confusion, when I first acknowledged a partiality for him. It was in the very place where I had yielded so much to Sir William Harley's pretended passion, the recollection of which occasioned a sigh, but the tenderness of my lover soon dissipated my uneasiness.

As I had lost Sir William, by granting too much, I resolved to pursue a contrary conduct to Mr. Manley. I did not disguise my affection for him, but studiously prevented every liberty, and the most trivial indulgence. He complained of my too great reserve and lamented my coldness to him, in terms the most passionate, and respectful. Had he known my heart, he would have had little reason to accuse it of insensibility : but I valued his affection too much, to run the risk of being deprived of it.

I was frequently at his uncle's, and the old gentleman would sometimes profess a tender partiality for me, and jestingly propose himself to me as a husband.

Miss

Miss Dixon seemed to have a sincere regard for me, and entirely banished that reserve which before had cast such a veil over her merit. The young gentleman alone seemed dissatisfied. He complained of the distance I kept him at. I told him, with a smile, it was the fashion in London. He would then insist upon teaching me their country method of courtship. A few kisses was always the consequence of the least familiarity of expression, which I would immediately repulse. He would then accuse my indifference, and I his want of respect: but these quarrels were trifling, and amply recompensed by the pleasures of a reconciliation. One more serious, however, in the beginning, was too favourable to him in the end, and destructive of that resolution which I had for a long time persevered in.

I met at Sir Robert's, a young empty coxcomb of a Knight, possessed of no recommendation, but a tolerable person. He affected to be a fine gentleman, though nature certainly designed him for a plain country farmer. He made love

to me, which I must own diverted me, as his manner was the most ridiculous you can conceive. Of this wretch Manley was jealous, and one day that Sir Thomas Farquhar had been uncommonly gallant, and I, as usual, diverted with his absurdities, I perceived a change in Mr. Manley's countenance, which was too evident to escape observation. We all enquired the cause, and he attributed it to a violent head-ach, but a look that he darted at me, convinced me he had assigned a false reason, and that his disorder arose not from a pain in his head, but from a jealousy conceived in his heart.

I was rejoiced when the hour came for me to leave Sir Robert Dixon's, as Mr. Manley always accompanied me home. But when I arose to take my leave, he coolly asked me, if I would permit him to attend me? I was astonished at the question, as it was the first time that he thought it necessary to ask it: and the manner in which it was said, surprised me no less.

In my way home with him, I enquired the reason of his behaviour, when he acknowledged,

knowledge, that it was owing to Sir Thomas Farquhar; and that when he considered the distance which I always forced him to observe, he could not believe it possible I had any affection for him; for that he knew, by his own heart, that a sincere love was incapable of imposing such restrictions.

I told him, that might be the case with the male part of the creation, but it was very different with my own sex, to whom custom and education had made such a conduct natural.

He was far from being satisfied with this answer. I then ridiculed his fears; but all endeavours to restore his good humour were unavailing.

When we got to my house, I again assured him of my esteem for him in terms the most animated and lively. The gloom which had overspread his features vanished, but he still appeared dejected.

I now began to be serious myself; and knowing I had sufficient cause to be displeased at his incredulity, and the mean

opinion he entertained of me, I reproached him in very severe terms ; he retorted, and a quarrel ensued. But how shall I tell you what succeeded our reconciliation?—I blush at the remembrance !—In short, he obtained what I had resolved never to have yielded. And though his tenderest assiduities could never procure the most trifling favour from me, his jealousy and the wish to make him happy, so far overcame my reason, that amidst a thousand tender assurances of love, I forgot every thing I ought to have remembered, and left him nothing farther either to doubt of or to desire. It was with the utmost reluctance I could bring myself to entreat him to leave me, and it was with still greater difficulty he consented to my request. But I owed something to my character, (it was indeed all that I had left me to preserve) and it would have occasioned suspicions injurious to me, had he stayed later than usual.

When he was gone I abandoned myself to reflection. I determined that, though it was not the first deviation from virtue, it should be the last transgression of the kind I would be guilty of.

These

These thoughts kept me awake till morning, when I slept till near eleven o'clock, and before I had finished my breakfast, Mr. Manley paid me a visit. I blushed at the sight of him, and received him with some confusion. He pressed my hand, and with a voice softened to the most melting tenderness, enquired after my health. Alas! every prudent, and virtuous resolve vanished at his sight. I thought of nothing but my lover, and how to convince him more fully of my passion. One day succeeded another, and though each day was unmarked by variety, yet happiness was my portion in all! I had not the least fear of Manley's infidelity, his expressions of tenderness were at once lively and artless, and seemed to be the genuine effusions of the heart.

Whenever I saw Sir Thomas Farquhar, I assumed the most distant behaviour to him, and had the satisfaction of being freed from his silly addresses, which, by my being familiarized to, had lost the power of diverting.

Now, said I to myself, I am happy: I have met with a man who is a stranger
T H J
to

to vice and infidelity. Bred up in the country, he is ignorant of those arts which are practised in town, where, as Thompson expresses it,

“ Even love itself is bitterness of soul,
 “ A pensive anguish pining at the heart,
 “ Or, sunk to sordid interest, feels no more
 “ That noble wish, that never-cloy’d desire,
 “ Which, selfish joy disdaining, seeks, alone,
 “ To bless the dearer object of its flame.”

But, alas! I was mistaken! Insincerity and inconstancy, are the natural vices of man: they are the growth of the heart, and not of any particular place or climate.

I did not observe the least diminution in Manley’s tenderness to me; his whole soul seemed devoted to me. The last evening that we passed together, was still the same; nay, indeed, rather more lively. He seemed unable to leave me; he went to the door several different times, and as often returned. I did not notice this conduct any more than to attribute it to an excess of fondness which I had frequently observed in him. At last he took his leave, but left me little prepared for what the next morning made me acquainted with.

L E T.

L E T T E R VIII.

MR. Manley generally came to me every day about twelve o'clock; but on the day succeeding our last parting, instead of his coming himself as usual, I received a letter from him; the contents of which were as follow.

“ I had not resolution to declare to you last night, what there is a fatal necessity of your being acquainted with. I expect from your resentment the keenest reproaches; when, if my heart was truly known to you, I should be more an object of compassion than resentment. I sit down to write to you, what I could not bring myself to speak, and can scarcely at this moment, though unawed by your presence, have resolution to declare, what will make us both wretched for ever. If there was a possibility of keeping you ignorant of it, I know I should be so unjust to you as to conceal it. You can never imagine what I wish to disclose to
you,

you, and perhaps will with difficulty be brought to believe that your Henry is perjured and unjust. Yet so it is, I am false to the only woman in the world, that I ever did or ever can love ; and though I am so, my own heart suffers more than yours can do.

“ Know then, that I yesterday gave my uncle my most sacred promise in a fortnight’s time to be married to Miss Dixon, nor can I retract my word. I know he is too just to endeavour to force my inclination ; but though I should have had spirit to resist an assumed authority, I could not withstand his friendly solicitation. Indeed, I owe every thing to him.

“ He tells me, my union with my cousin has long been the most lively wish of his heart ; that he has proposed it to her, and finds she likewise approves it. And shall I be the only obstacle to his happiness, and the cause of his disappointment ? I felt that to be impossible. Forgive me then if, you being absent, I yielded to what he requested of me. Last night I intended to have informed you of it,

it, but found it impracticable : I could not tell you I had rendered myself unworthy of you ; and perhaps, by my fatal compliance with my uncle's will, have excluded myself from your sight for ever.

“ Do me the justice of believing, that had his fortune alone been in question, I had, without hesitation, cheerfully resigned it, and been contented with want and penury to have preserved my love and faith inviolate to you : but there was his happiness dependant on my determination. And could I possibly shew so little regard to his inclination, who from my childhood, had studiously endeavoured to gratify every wish of my heart?

“ I shall expect your answer with the utmost impatience. I dare not hope for forgiveness, and I have scarcely courage to petition for the happiness of being once more permitted to appear in your presence.

“ Believe me sincere, my ever-loved Amelia, when I assure you, in the most

facred manner, that I would purchase the felicity of being only yours at the price of any thing but ingratitude to the best of men."

On reading this letter I was involved in consternation and despair, but immediately determined how to act. I ordered instant preparations to be made for my setting off for London, and when every thing was in readiness for my departure, I wrote a note to Sir Robert Dixon, with an excuse for not waiting on him, and his family, to take my leave; as I had just received a letter, which required my immediate presence in town on indispensable business. This done, I left orders with my woman to pack up all my things, and immediately to follow me.

With a heavy heart I arrived in London, and went directly to Mrs. Shelburn. My disgust against the place I had just quitted was so great, that I settled it on her eldest boy, who was my godson, and resigned all rights to it in his favour.

I was

I was informed that Mr. Manley, soon after my having left the country, was so ill that his life was judged in danger; but, on his recovery, he had fulfilled his promise to his uncle, and married Miss Dixon.

That he was sincere in his professions, and that the marriage was against his own inclination, his subsequent conduct demonstrated beyond a possibility of doubting. I received the following letter from him before his union; and as it was directed in a different hand, I opened it without hesitation.

“ Have I deserved the contempt with which I am treated? Is your conduct consistent with those repeated declarations of tenderness and truth which you have so frequently blest me with? You will say, perhaps, that the first violation of fidelity was mine: but you knew so well your own power over me, that one look from you would have induced me to break my promise to my uncle. I feel that I cannot support life without you, and when I first yielded to the delightful
infa-

infatuation of love, I was ignorant that it was the wish of my uncle that I should be united to my cousin. If I had been acquainted with it, I would have endured every pain which a slighted, hopeless passion can inflict, sooner than have sought to have gained your heart, when I knew I should be under the fatal necessity of resigning you.

“ One thing more, and I have done.

“ I cannot bear what I at present suffer : I am convinced every thing I should have endured from a rejection of the marriage, would have been far inferior to the misery of losing you. I feel it impossible to live, deprived of you, and am come to the resolution of leaving my uncle’s house, and cast myself at your feet for pity and forgiveness. Deign then, once more, to accept a heart which has never for a moment wandered to another, or ceased to beat for you, and that its owner’s greatest fault was too high a sense of gratitude for benefits received, and an unwillingness to requite obligations with disappointment and vexation.

“ I sought

“ I fought no selfish pleasure ; on the contrary, I sacrificed my own happiness to the quiet of my friend and father.

“ Had you but once more consented to have seen me, and told me you lamented the necessity of our separation, and grieved for what I suffered, I would have been contented, and should have had no cause to have accused you of unkindness : but the cold disdain with which you left the country, without even so much as one adieu, or a sigh at parting, convinces me you never loved me. If you believed me unfaithful, and that it was my own wishes that disunited us, was I not worthy one reproach ? For, as Young says,

“ — If, indeed, you thought me false,
 “ Had you been thus serene, calm, and unruffled ?
 “ No—my heart says no. Passions, if great,
 “ Tho’ turned to their reverse, keep their degree,
 “ And are great passions still. And she who,
 “ When she thinks her lover false,
 “ Retains her temper, never lost her heart.”

“ If you ever had an affection for me, how am I to reconcile that affection to your conduct ? We do not so easily resign what we love ; and I know too well the
 the

the conflicts of my own heart, between my tenderness for you, and what I considered as my duty, ever to believe, that, if your regard for me had been as fervent as I once imagined, that you could with so much apparent ease have resigned me for ever.

“ In a few days I mean to be with you ; and when I have sacrificed every consideration to my passion for you, may I flatter myself with the hope that you will then believe it sincere, and reward its sincerity ? ”

I read this letter with a mixture of pain and pleasure. I was not sorry to find that he thought me worth regretting, and if he was sincere in his protestations I was grieved at his situation ; I acknowledged the justice of his compliance with his uncle's will ; and though I fervently and sincerely wished him happy, I should have been wretched if his marriage with Miss Dixon had been with his own desire : so inconsistent is the heart that loves ! But I was not so blinded by that passion, nor so lost to reason, as not to put a stop to his coming to town : I therefore wrote immediately to prevent it.

“ You

“ You accuse me, Mr. Manley, of treating you with contempt, and with an inconsistency of conduct: accusations which I am far from meriting, and which I never expected to have heard from you.

“ You say, I could have induced you to decline fulfilling your engagements: but, granting I have that power over you, if you imagine I would have used it to have made you act contrary to the dictates of your own heart and reason, or exerted it to be detrimental to your interest, you have formed an erroneous opinion of me, and are yet ignorant of my real character and disposition.

“ In our separation, I am in no manner concerned: heaven knows it was far from being my wish. I will not say it was yours, nor accuse you of being the occasion of it. I will consider it as owing to a fatal necessity, to which we are both unavoidably doomed to submit.

“ I believe you sincere, when you profess your ignorance of your uncle's intentions on our first acquaintance; and had he sooner declared them to you, it had been happier for me. There is now no remedy: to his will you must be conforma-

formable ; and know me better than to believe, that any infringement of your duty there, is the way to effect a reconciliation with me. You imagine that the pain of losing me, is the severest that you possibly could experience : you think it so, because you at present endure it ; but rest assured, Mr. Manley, that a deviation from honour and gratitude would occasion more real and lasting misery. Perhaps you are yet a stranger to remorse and self-accusation : beware how you become acquainted with it ; act consistently with what your own heart points out as right ; and if your principles mislead you, you will yet have the consolation of knowing, that your intentions were just.

“ Wherefore, Mr. Manley, should I have seen you, before my departure from Leslie Grove ? There was a necessity that we should be separated, and why should I have embittered it by the pain of a formal adieu ? You are ignorant of what I suffered at parting. Pride may, for a time, support the heart, but it is a false spirit, which soon subsides, and sometimes leaves us to repent of the too hasty step which it often obliges us to take. Not that

that this was my case ; mine was the result of reason : and whatever I might suffer in the performance, I was convinced it was what I ought to do. I had no right, no reasonable plea to reproach ; and, excuse me if I say, I was above complaining.

“ I think your conduct praise-worthy and commendable ; and as a friend, who sincerely wishes you happy, I advise, I conjure you to persevere. If you retract now, you are doubly culpable ; you will be ungrateful to the best of friends, and have deviated from your word, which every man of honour considers as sacred. You was unjust to doubt my affection : I gave you every proof of the most tender attachment it was possible to bestow ; and if you think my conduct was not the effect of love, you have not that esteem for me, which you have so frequently professed : nay, indeed, I must be even despicable in your eyes. But I do not mean to make any fresh protestations ; every thing relative to love, it must be our mutual study to forget : and let me entreat you to reconcile your heart to submit to your uncle’s will : for, believe me, all the benefit you will receive from
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acting contrary to it, will be remorse and disappointment.

“ I have resolved never to see you more, and should not now have wrote, but to assure you, it is my fixed and determined resolution.

“ Believe me sincere, when I assure you, that I most ardently wish you happy, and shall lament the necessity of our separation, more than is consistent with my own tranquillity. However the step, which you offer to take, might evince the fervency of your passion, it would not persuade me of its sincerity; for if you once swerve from that rectitude which ought to mark every action of your life, I should have more vanity, or more credulity than I at present possess, if I believed it would be your last transgression, and that I should not, in my turn, be a sufferer by your falshood.

“ I have now informed you of my real, and undisguised sentiments; and as, after what is past, we never can be happy together, let me entreat you to forget me. If it will be any alleviation to your distress, know that I resign you with as much regret as you can possibly feel at losing me.”

L E T-

L E T T E R IX.

MR. Manley's last letter had awakened all my tenderness for him, and whatever indifference I might affect in writing, it was with the utmost reluctance I could bring myself to renounce him for ever: but I was convinced it was the only way to make me happy, as every regret he would have experienced, on account of a breach of promise to his uncle, I should have considered as a reproach to myself. Whether what I had wrote, had any effect on him, or that illness had awakened him to a right sense of his conduct, I know not, as I did not hear any thing from him for some time; but at length I received the following letter.

“ I have fulfilled what you desired; I have given myself to another, and am now compleatly wretched, from the conviction you never can be mine.

“ You talk of the pleasures that attend acting rightly; where are they to be found? and why am I debarred from them? Have I not yielded up every blessing

sing to a principle of justice, and where is this last consolation? I gave up all to ensure that, but I have not yet attained it.

“ I have been dangerously ill ; would to heaven I had not lived to inform you of it ! Had I died then, I had been wholly yours, and had escaped the curse of being chained to another, when my whole soul is devoted to you. Amelia, best loved and most adored of women, compassionate the ravings of madness and despair. I have loved, and do love you almost to a frantic degree of fondness, and my passion has been returned. Can I then calmly and patiently support the thought, that I shall never see you more ?

“ The last expression in your letter was the only one that gave me the least degree of pleasure or consolation, and that I have pressed to my lips a thousand times, and as often have I bedewed it with my tears. I wear it next my heart, and till that heart ceases to beat, never shall they be separated.

“ You was not formed to inspire a common or transitory passion ; the graces
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of your person, an understanding superior to most women, a delicacy joined to sensibility, all, all declare you worthy of the most ardent love, and such I at this moment experience for you. Ah! if heaven had permitted me to enjoy the continuance of those blessings, once so lavishly bestowed upon me, I would resign every other pretension to happiness, nor form a wish that would not receive its gratification from mutual love and tenderness.

“ How different are you from her to whom I am unfortunately united! Every one seems astonished at my melancholy, when, if they knew my real situation, they would wonder at the government I have over myself, and be surprized that the recollection of what I have lost, does not hurry me into madness.

“ You say, I *imagine* the pain of losing you to be the severest I could endure: by experience, I am convinced it is; nor could human nature support agonies superior to what I suffer. Don't talk to me of the torments of self-accusation, they cannot equal a despairing love. Fool that I was so implicitly to obey
you!

you ! I ought to have seen you, and at your feet, once more, acknowledged my passion ; and if you cruelly had rejected my solicitation, still I should not have bound myself for ever to another, when I was conscious I had not a heart to bestow. I have perjured myself in the sight of Heaven ; I have sworn eternal love to an object that I shall ever behold with indifference ; yet this you call acting rightly : but to me it is the height of wickedness. My doubting your affection, proceeded from the excess of mine ; and I assure you, upon my honour, that my esteem for you can only be equalled by my love and tenderness.

“ You say it must be my study to forget you. How coolly you tell me so ! To you the task may be easy, but if it is a crime to esteem and love you, pray Heaven to have mercy on me, for I shall ever be criminal.

“ You tell me you wish me happy : it is kind in you to concern yourself about me ; but, alas ! the wish is fruitless. I never can be so ; but my most ardent prayers shall be for your felicity. Yet,
if

if you will grant me one request, I shall not be wholly miserable. Suffer me to write to you, and sometimes bless me with an answer ; if it is but in few words, to tell me you are in health, I shall be contented and satisfied. Surely something may be allowed to tenderness when so much has been sacrificed to duty ! If you think what I have asked too great an indulgence, let me conjure you to write to me once more, to tell me that I have acted rightly, and that you pity and approve my conduct. If you will comply with what I have solicited, but have the cruelty to forbid any farther correspondence, I engage myself, in the most solemn manner, not even to answer your letter, or in any way again to address you. Without your commiseration I cannot live : and do not, by the refusal of my entreaties, drive to absolute despair, a heart which is already almost broken."

" I thought the request so reasonable, and my own wishes coinciding with Mr. Manley's entreaties, that I once more wrote to him.—It was an imprudent action, and not to be vindicated ; but remember I promised, Sir, to be sincere in my relation,

tion, and I have many errors and weaknesses yet to reveal. The answer which I sent I have also copied for your perusal. I know not any way by which I can so clearly shew my own sentiments, or so strongly delineate the characters of those I have approved, as that of making you acquainted with the whole of my correspondence. If, therefore, it should prove uninteresting, or tiresome to you, you will consider the motive from which I acted, and excuse me.—My answer was in these words :

“ Your earnest solicitations have persuaded me, against my judgment, once more to write to you : but remember, that you have given me your sacred promise, that, if it is my desire, you will not even return an answer to this. Think me not cruel, or unkind, if I exact the performance of it, and tell you it is my settled determination, that this is to be the last letter that shall ever pass between us.

“ Ah, Manley ! passion has triumphed over your reason, and rendered you insensible to every other consideration, or you must have experienced the pleasure which the retrospect of a just action never fails

fails to bestow: but you have not yet done any thing, without you reconcile your mind to the engagements you have formed, and endeavour to overcome your own regret and disappointment.

“ You have the happiness of an amiable, deserving woman, dependent upon you. Your generosity and humanity, will not, I hope, permit you to be entirely regardless of her tranquillity. This letter will, I fear, occasion you no more pleasure than the former. But why should I soothe a passion, which your duty, your honour, and happiness, call loudly on you to overcome? You must forget me, and whilst you are a stranger to my tenderness, you can more easily conquer your own.

“ I was afflicted at the knowledge of your illness.—But wherefore do you wish for death? There are yet, I hope, many happy days reserved for you: and when you have acquired resolution to subdue the weakness of your mind, I know not any thing which can oppose it. Marriage has not made you miserable; for were you still perfectly disengaged, we must have been separated. Do not con-

sider it then as an addition to your misfortune, but rather, as is in reality the case, the cause which has lightened them. The comparison which you draw between me and Mrs. Manley, is the most unjust one in the world. You are no judge of her merit and perfection: you love another, and consider her as the cause that has deprived you of the woman of your affections: but, believe me, my dear Manley, a supposition of that kind is cruel and unreasonable. She is innocent of your afflictions; do not then, by neglect or unkindness, make her a partaker of them. Your picture of me is too flattering, but you are blind to my faults, and magnify every thing that is pleasing or agreeable. Had not any thing intervened to oppose the continuance of our acquaintance, it is more than possible, that you had, in a short time, seen me, such as I really am, a miserable woman.

“ In any other circumstances but the present, the loss of your affection would have been the greatest misfortune I could have experienced, but now I wish it, as it is the only way to restore you to peace. Judge then how ardently I wish you felicity,

licity, and what I would sacrifice to promote it. Do not say that the wish is a fruitless one; you do not know what time and absence may effect. The indulgence which you urge me to yield to tenderness, would render ineffectual the efforts of duty, and entirely counteract the good effects of what you have already done.

“ Is my approbation of your conduct necessary to your peace? Know that I more than approve it: but you must have resolution to proceed. You are married, and have every reason to believe, that your wife is fully sensible of your merit. You have experienced the pains of a hopeless passion, and let the recollection of what you have endured, induce you to guard against her feeling the same misery. Her sorrows would be more exquisite, as the sensibility of our sex far exceeds that of yours. You have the privilege of complaining, but the very pride that would oblige her to keep her distress concealed, would be an aggravation of it, and make her feel it more acutely.

“ And now, as this is the last time that I shall ever address you, let me entreat

you to consider of what I have here said ; and believe me, if I was not too well convinced of the necessity of all correspondence, of every kind, entirely ceasing between us, I would not a second time repeat that you must not falsify your engagement to me. In pity to the sentiments which I still entertain for you, it ought to be as much your wish as mine : do not then shew so total a disregard to my peace, as to persist in keeping alive a passion, which, in the commencement, was indiscreet and criminal, and has terminated in misery.

“ If it will be any consolation to you, know that I shall never banish you from my remembrance. No, I shall ever think of you, but shall endeavour to retain the recollection unembittered by the pangs of unavailing wishes, and fruitless tender-
nesses. Reconcile then your own heart, my ever valued friend, to that fate which Heaven has allotted it ; and let me at least have the satisfaction of knowing, that I am attached to a man who considers every promise as sacred ; and that, though we may be wretched, we are deserving of pity.”

L E T.

LETTER X.

MR. Manley kept his word, he did not write to me any more, and I endeavoured, by every art in my power, to banish him from my heart, tho' I had not any thing to accuse him of. I once considered him as worthy of my love; and the very circumstance which parted us, proceeded more from the goodness, than the inconstancy of his heart.

I stayed some time with Mrs. Shelburn, but I became tired of that situation, and returned to my own house. I resolved to contract the number of my male visiters, and increase my female acquaintance, in hopes that I might meet with one who would recompence me for the loss I sustained in Mrs. Molefworth's death.

The tenderness for Mr. Manley, which pride had almost conquered, was, by a conviction of his love, revived. His first letter I considered as the mean subterfuge of a satiated, tired passion; but the subsequent ones were too strongly marked to leave

leave me a doubt of their sincerity. I had been happier if he had not undeceived me. I had not, till my knowledge of him, any reason, from my own experience, to entertain a favourable opinion of his sex, I believed that in every degree and rank of life, all were equally strangers to fidelity and justice, in their transactions with women; from Sir William Harley, who was a proficient in the wiles of seduction, to the seemingly sincere and ingenuous Moreton. Yet, neither of those gentlemen were thought deficient in honour, generosity, or courage; and would, except in their commerce with my own sex, have disdained the commission, or accusation of a falsehood: No wonder then that my first opinion of Manley should be unjust to him.

I now stayed more at home than I had ever before done, and enjoyed as much satisfaction as disappointment, and a tender, hopeless affection would permit.

Mrs. Beaumont, a lady with whom I had been acquainted in the life-time of Mr. Ledwich, and who, when I was in London, used to be with me often, had
now,

now, on a visit with her, a young lady whom she called Miss Melville, and who was a distant relation of hers. She had but a small fortune, and was in some measure dependent upon Mrs. Beaumont. Whether that was the occasion of a continued dejection of spirits, I could not pretend to determine, tho' I do not know a situation more likely to depress them. She appeared pleased with my society, and happy in my company; but whenever I enquired the reason of her melancholy, she would answer, that she was naturally serious. She never seemed either offended or flattered at the earnestness with which I sought to engage her confidence; and as I seldom saw her more depressed at one time than at another, I was induced to believe, that her distresses, let them be of what nature they would, were not recent. I was a little astonished at her inflexible silence, and her indifference to my assiduous attention, to dissipate the gloom which constantly surrounded her. Mrs. Beaumont never appeared to observe it, which made me imagine she was, in some measure, the cause, and that opinion made me more anxiously wish to be acquainted

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AMELIA LEDWICH.

THE FIRST VOLUME.